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## DIPLOMACY CONCERNING THE SANTA FE ROAD

Among the early matters to furnish occasion for diplomatic communications between Poinsett, the first United States minister to Mexico, and the Mexican government was one providing for the survey, marking out, and protection of a road leading from the frontier settlements of the United States on the Missouri River to the nearest settlements in New Mexico. In the years immediately following the collapse of Spanish power in Mexico the trade which had previously maintained a precarious and fitful existence by way of this route grew by leaps and bounds.<sup>1</sup> Under Spanish dominion it had been hampered by the usual unreasonable restrictions. In the period of uncertainty and confusion during the rapidly changing provisional governments in Mexico between 1821 and 1824 these restrictions were not enforced. They were not, however, formally removed. Neither did the officials at Mexico welcome the news of the growing intercourse on the far northern frontier.<sup>2</sup>

About the middle of 1823, Torrens, the Mexican *chargé* at Washington, reported that an expedition was about to set out from Kentucky for Santa Fe, with the ostensible purpose of opening up a mine which had been discovered; but it also appeared

<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this article is to study only the diplomatic relations between the United States and Mexico concerning the opening of the Santa Fe road. No attempt is made to trace the growth, extent, or importance of the Santa Fe trade. Much less is any space given to recounting the hardships suffered by the traders or the many interesting and tragic events of which they left accounts. A brief summary of such matters may be found in H. H. Bancroft's *History of Arizona and New Mexico* (Works, 17—San Francisco, 1889), 329 *et seq.* In the footnotes to these pages Bancroft gives the sources which he used. One of the most extensive, interesting, and important of them, Josiah Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies, or the Journal of a Santa Fe Trader during Eight Expeditions* (2d ed., New York, 1845), has recently been made easily available in R. G. Thwaites's collection of reprints, *Early Western Travels* (Cleveland, 1903), vols. 19-20. Henry Inman's *Old Santa Fe Trail* (New York, 1898) repeats many of Gregg's most exciting stories and adds others.

<sup>2</sup> Bancroft (*History of Arizona and New Mexico*, 329) incorrectly says: "With the end of Spanish rule ceased all opposition to the traffic on the part of the Mexican authorities."

that wagons loaded with merchandise were to accompany it. He thought that if orders were not given to prohibit or regulate this traffic numberless other adventurers would soon undertake it and thus develop a contraband trade that would defraud the simple natives into parting with their scanty earnings.<sup>3</sup> Two months later, he wrote that a subsequent report had stated that the mine which the expedition intended to exploit was within the limits of the United States.<sup>4</sup>

Shortly after receiving the first of these notes from Torrens, the government at Mexico sent instructions concerning the matter to the political chief of New Mexico. He was told that both the working of the mine and the contraband trade, in which Torrens thought the expedition from Kentucky would engage, were contrary to the laws; and that foreigners were expressly prohibited from working mines until they should have become naturalized citizens. Instructions were also given him to enforce the regulations governing these matters and to prevent the settlement of foreigners, until a colonization law should be passed establishing rules for their admission.<sup>5</sup> Toward the end of the same year, Torrens reported that a mercantile expedition to Santa Fe had returned with more than four hundred horses and mules, a quantity of beaver skins, and a considerable amount of money.<sup>6</sup>

With the substitution in 1824 of trains of wagons for the earlier trains of mules and other pack animals, the trade passed the experimental stage and henceforth attracted the attention of merchants with more capital to invest and more influence. Memorials from Missouri people demanded provision for, and protection of, the trade. In January of 1825, Senator Benton introduced a bill into Congress, which was passed shortly after and approved on the last day of the Monroe administration, providing for a commission to survey and mark out a road from the Missouri to the Arkansas River, the latter being the international boundary according to the treaty with Spain. The presi-

<sup>3</sup> Torrens to the secretary of foreign relations, June 21, 1823. *La Diplomacia Mexicana* (Mexico, 1912), 2:13.

<sup>4</sup> Torrens to the secretary of foreign relations, August 21, 1823. *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>5</sup> Alamán to political chief of New Mexico, August 20, 1823. *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Torrens to the secretary of foreign relations, December 16, 1823. *Ibid.*, 70.

dent was also authorized to mark the road from the boundary to Santa Fe under regulations to be agreed upon between the two governments. Treaties were to be made with the Indians to obtain their consent to the marking of the route and to its use by the citizens of the United States and Mexico, and to secure pledges from them that they would protect travelers.<sup>7</sup>

The measures taken by the Congress of the United States early in 1825 to establish and protect the trade with northern Mexico were watched with jealous interest by Obregón, who had reached Washington in the preceding autumn as minister from Mexico. He reported that the commerce from Missouri was attracting much attention; that consuls had been appointed to go to Santa Fe, Chihuahua, and Saltillo to look after the interests of the traders; that no salaries were provided for them; and that, since the fees would be insufficient to support them, they were to be permitted to engage in trade themselves. These facts and the character of the persons who were likely to desire such posts made it certain, he thought, that contraband trade would be engaged in. This necessitated the establishment at St. Louis of a Mexican consul to watch the trade and to prevent fraud and the introduction of Anglo-American settlers.<sup>8</sup> On the receipt of this letter from Obregón the government at Mexico approved the establishment of a Mexican consul at St. Louis; and said that the United States consuls which had been appointed for Santa Fe, Chihuahua, and Saltillo would not be granted their equatuers until the treaty between the two countries establishing provisions for the purpose had been agreed upon.<sup>9</sup> Obregón had been instructed to undertake no negotiation for such a treaty and was informed that it would have to await the arrival in Mexico of the minister whom the United States government was sending.

The instructions which Poinsett had received just before his departure for Mexico included a copy of the act of Congress pro

<sup>7</sup> For the text of the bill see Gales and Seton, *Register of Debates*, 18 Congress, 2 Session, 1:ap. 102; also Bancroft, *History of Arizona and New Mexico*, 333.

<sup>8</sup> Obregón to secretary of foreign relations, March 30, 1825. Manuscript in Mexico: Relaciones Exteriores.

<sup>9</sup> Secretary of foreign relations to Obregón, May 28, 1825. Manuscript in Mexico: Relaciones Exteriores.

viding for the road. He was instructed to assure the Mexican government that the project for the construction of this road had originated in a spirit of friendship for Mexico and in the desire to open up commerce and friendly intercourse between the two countries. It was supposed, Clay added, that Mexico would be willing to bear the expense of constructing the road within Mexican territory.<sup>10</sup>

On June 17, 1825, a little more than two weeks after Poinsett's reception by the president of Mexico, he addressed Alamán, the secretary for foreign relations, on the subject of the road, inclosing a copy of the act of Congress, and informed him that three commissioners, appointed by the president of the United States, were proceeding to their work; that they were not to pass the boundary until an agreement had been reached with Mexico for that purpose; and that, although the boundary was not yet agreed upon between the two countries, the road was for their mutual benefit, and that it would make little difference, so far as the project was concerned, where the boundary should ultimately be located. Great emphasis was laid upon the friendly spirit with which the enterprise had been undertaken, and attention was called to his authorization to receive from the Mexican government propositions for the completion of the road and for regulating intercourse between the two countries. Poinsett described the route hitherto taken by the caravans, named the Indian tribes along it, told of the treaties being made with them, and said that the enterprise would probably have a wholesome effect on the Indians.<sup>11</sup> In his dispatch to Clay of the next day inclosing a copy of this note, Poinsett said that Alamán was opposed to making any arrangement with reference to the proposed road until the question of the boundary line should be settled.<sup>12</sup>

It was more than a month after receiving Poinsett's note be-

<sup>10</sup> Clay to Poinsett, March 26, 1825. Instructions, vol. 10, manuscript in bureau of indexes and archives, department of state.

<sup>11</sup> Poinsett to Alamán, June 17, 1825. Dispatches from Mexico, vol. 1, manuscript in bureau of indexes and archives, department of state. A copy of the same is in Mexico: Relaciones Exteriores.

<sup>12</sup> Poinsett to Clay, June 18, 1825. Dispatches from Mexico, vol. 1, manuscript in bureau of indexes and archives, department of state.

fore the Mexican government replied. On July 20, Alamán wrote that he had delayed in the hope of being able to make proposals at the same time concerning other very important related matters; that it would not be easy to separate the negotiations concerning the road from those concerning limits and a general commercial treaty; that the Mexican government was convinced that the road would be useful and beneficial for both countries; and that Mexico would be disposed to concur in the plan of the United States. But the president thought that it would be better to undertake first the negotiation of the treaties of commerce and limits, leaving the arrangement for the road as a dependent matter.<sup>13</sup> In his dispatch transmitting Alamán's note to Washington, Poinsett said he feared that the Mexicans were resolved to postpone marking out the road until a commission should have examined that portion of the country with a view to the settlement of the boundary line.<sup>14</sup> On July 27, in replying to Alamán's note, Poinsett wrote that he regretted the delay it would cause in marking out the road, if the Mexican government should insist on concluding first the treaties of commerce and limits, or on waiting until a commission should explore the country; and that such postponement would injure the profitable commerce just coming into existence between New Mexico and the western states of the United States. He still hoped, he said, that the president of Mexico would alter his determination and authorize Alamán to enter into negotiations on the subject of the road.<sup>15</sup> About two weeks passed after receiving Poinsett's last mentioned note before Alamán responded to it. In the meantime information had come which strengthened the determination of the Mexican government.

On August 5 that government had received from the gov-

<sup>13</sup> Alamán to Poinsett, July 20, 1825. Dispatches from Mexico, vol. 1, manuscript in bureau of indexes and archives, department of state. The same in Spanish is in Mexico: *Relaciones Exteriores*. In this note Alamán declared the unwillingness of Mexico to make a boundary treaty until a commission should be sent to examine the country near the proposed boundary. He suggested that this should be a joint commission, and that it should be charged with completing the construction of the road.

<sup>14</sup> Poinsett to Clay, July 22, 1825. Dispatches from Mexico, vol. 1, manuscript in bureau of indexes and archives, department of state.

<sup>15</sup> Poinsett to Alamán, July 27, 1825. Dispatches from Mexico, vol. 1, manuscript in bureau of indexes and archives, department of state. The same is in Mexico: *Relaciones Exteriores*.

ernor of Chihuahua a report concerning the northeastern frontier country. This report had been written on May 13 in response to a request which the government had made on April 19 preceding. It described the country drained by the Missouri and Arkansas rivers, the contour and appearance of the prairie lands, the numerous rivers affording drainage and water communication, the crops for which the region was adapted, the birds and animals, and the Indian tribes inhabiting the country. The Anglo-Americans, he said, knew the region better than the Spaniards and Mexicans; and, because they knew of its resources, they had taken advantage of Spanish ignorance to obtain it. The government of the United States was encouraging immigration into this country, the writer of the report added, and he thought the plan to open commerce with Mexico was for the purpose of fostering such settlements. He pointed out that, when the old restrictions were relaxed, goods began to come from the United States into the northern Mexican settlements at one-third of their former cost: and that because of this the people had welcomed the Anglo-Americans. He thought this trade would help to civilize the troublesome Indians and would be to the advantage of the distant and detached territory of New Mexico; but he believed that the consequent increase of Anglo-Americans in the neighboring territory of the United States might crowd more Indians back on the unprotected Mexican frontier. He thought that an effort should be made to preserve harmony with the United States, but that only such advantages should be conceded as would be compatible with Mexican interests. The country on the Mexican side, he declared, should be colonized by Mexico, and for this purpose an increase of forces was needed.<sup>16</sup>

It was on August 10, five days after receiving this report, that

<sup>16</sup> Governor Urquidí of Chihuahua to the secretary of foreign affairs, May 13, 1825. Manuscript in Mexico: *Relaciones Exteriores*. The transcript of the report of which this is a condensed translation covers seven typewritten pages. Accompanying this report in the archives are numerous orders to various officials inclosing copies of it or portions of it and commenting on its significance. The most interesting is that to the secretary of war of August 5, 1825, asking that the necessary precautionary measures be taken. On October 26, following, Pedraza of the war department wrote to the office of foreign relations saying that troops had been sent to Chihuahua and New Mexico.

Alamán wrote in reply to Poinsett's note of July 27 saying that the president found it impossible to hasten the time for concluding the arrangements concerning the road. He said that it would help to shorten the necessary delay and make it possible to afford some protection in the meantime, if Poinsett would be so kind as to report as soon as possible the results of the United States commission which was surveying the portion of the road on their side of the present boundary.<sup>17</sup> In transmitting Alamán's note to Clay, Poinsett said that he had made no further proposition since he considered it useless.<sup>18</sup>

When Clay received Poinsett's reports of the difficulties he was encountering in trying to obtain the Mexican government's consent to the opening of the road, he wrote in reply that the president of the United States regretted to learn of the reluctance of Mexico to agree to the measure. Clay declared that the road was intended for purely commercial purposes, and that no misconception could be greater than that it had originated in a desire for territorial acquisition. The road, he added, would be to the advantage of both countries, and if either could lose anything it would probably be the United States, since many enterprising citizens were likely to be induced to emigrate to the Mexican provinces. He observed that the road already existed in fact, and that the proposal was only to render it plainer and more useful.<sup>19</sup>

The local authorities in New Mexico were vitally interested in the trade with the Anglo-Americans. In September of 1825,

<sup>17</sup> Alamán to Poinsett, August 10, 1825. Duplicate Dispatches from Poinsett, manuscript in bureau of indexes and archives, department of state. The same in Spanish is in manuscript in Mexico: *Relaciones Exteriores*. Having decided to postpone the opening of the road it is interesting to notice the additional reason which Alamán discovered and urged. Poinsett had tried to spur the Mexicans to activity by saying that if the matter were not soon arranged still further delay would be occasioned because it would be necessary for Congress to act again and make additional provision. Alamán now said that because of the similarity of the Mexican constitution to that of the United States it would be necessary for the president of Mexico to submit to the Mexican congress the matter of the road, just as the United States Congress had acted on the measure. But that could not be done until the next regular session, since the existing special session was prohibited by the constitution from considering any matter not named in the call for the special session.

<sup>18</sup> Poinsett to Clay, August 17, 1825. Duplicate Dispatches from Poinsett, manuscript in bureau of indexes and archives, department of state.

<sup>19</sup> Clay to Poinsett, September 24, 1825. Instructions, 10:225, manuscript in bureau of indexes and archives, department of state.

Storrs, one of the citizens of the United States who was then at Santa Fe, and whose report of the preceding year had been presented to Congress by Senator Benton early in 1825 when the latter was urging his bills for protecting the trade, wrote to Narbona, the governor of New Mexico, in reply to inquiries received shortly before. After answering specific questions concerning the trade and concerning the reports which he had made to his own government about it, Storrs insisted that the traders from the United States had not knowingly violated any of the laws of Mexico. He emphasized the sympathy which the United States had shown for the Spanish-American states while they were struggling against Spain; cited the declaration of President Monroe against the expected interference of the European powers to assist Spain; and declared that the desire to open the proposed road arose not merely out of a wish to profit from the trade but to bind closer the interests of the two sister republics.<sup>20</sup>

In the spring of 1825, Escudero, a member of the legislature of the state of Chihuahua, set out from the city of that name to travel in the United States. He was interested in the trade and wished to study the institutions of the neighboring republic. His route passed by way of El Paso and Santa Fe. On June 9, while at the latter place, he was given a commission by Baca, then political chief of New Mexico, authorizing him to enter into arrangements with the authorities in the United States to check robberies and murders by Indians along the borders.<sup>21</sup> In accepting the commission Escudero promised to bear all the expense himself.<sup>22</sup> After his arrival at St. Louis he entered into relations with William Clark, the superintendent of Indian affairs. The latter addressed a courteous note to Escudero on September 25 saying that the United States was desirous of seeing peace and security maintained along the border, telling of the commission which was at that time engaged in marking out the road and making treaties with the Indians for the protection of

<sup>20</sup> Augustus Storrs to Governor Narbona, Santa Fe, September 25, 1825. Manuscript in Mexico: *Relaciones Exteriores*.

<sup>21</sup> Baca to Escudero, Santa Fe, June 9, 1825. Manuscript in Mexico: *Relaciones Exteriores*.

<sup>22</sup> Escudero to Baca, Santa Fe, June 9, 1825. Manuscript in Mexico: *Relaciones Exteriores*.

the citizens of both countries, and adding that there was a project on foot for establishing a military post on the Arkansas to protect the trade route; but he declared that he had no power to treat with Escudero.<sup>23</sup> Obregón in Washington, seeing newspaper accounts of the arrival of Escudero at St. Louis and of his attempt to treat with the authorities there, sent a dispatch concerning the matter to his government on October 11.<sup>24</sup> Another report was sent by Obregón on January 16, 1826, with the information that Escudero had come on to Washington and had there endeavored to take up the matter with the government. After examining his papers Obregón was convinced that his commission did not confer on him authority sufficient to treat with the United States government. Escudero thereupon abandoned his efforts and returned to Mexico, asking Obregón to explain his mission to the government. Obregón made a very pertinent suggestion that the central authorities at Mexico inform the officials of the provinces concerning the proper method of treating with foreign powers.<sup>25</sup>

As soon as Obregón's first report of the matter, dated October 1, reached Mexico the central government wrote to the political chief of New Mexico demanding a full and circumstantial account of the mission.<sup>26</sup> In the meantime Baca had been replaced at Santa Fe by Narbona. The latter referred the matter to the former, and on January 30, 1826, received a reply inclosing a copy of the commission which had been conferred on Escudero on June 9, preceding. Baca gave as his motive his insatiable desire for the happiness of the region and explained that the expedition involved no cost to the government since Escudero bore all the expense himself,<sup>27</sup> which information was reported, on February 4, to the government at Mexico.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Clark to Escudero, St. Louis, September 25, 1825. Manuscript in Mexico: Relaciones Exteriores.

<sup>24</sup> Obregón to secretary of foreign relations, October 1, 1825. Manuscript in Mexico: Relaciones Exteriores.

<sup>25</sup> Obregón to secretary of foreign relations, January 16, 1826. Manuscript in Mexico: Relaciones Exteriores.

<sup>26</sup> Secretary of foreign relations to political chief, December 9, 1825. Manuscript in Mexico: Relaciones Exteriores.

<sup>27</sup> Baca to Narbona, Santa Fe, January 30, 1826. Manuscript in Mexico: Relaciones Exteriores.

<sup>28</sup> Narbona to the secretary of foreign relations, Santa Fe, February 4, 1826,

The commission, for which provision had been made by the United States Congress early in 1825, was appointed on March 16 by James Barbour, secretary of war, and proceeded to survey the portion of the road within the limits of the United States as they had been established by the treaty with Spain. The commission consisted of George C. Sibley and two others,<sup>29</sup> who were accompanied by a surveyor and several assistants. The survey was begun on June 17, 1825, at Fort Osage,<sup>30</sup> on the Missouri River; and was completed to the Arkansas River four hundred and sixteen miles, by September 11. The commission had been informed that arrangements would be made with the Mexican government for continuing their work from there to Santa Fe, and that additional instructions for the purpose would be sent them by the time they reached the boundary so that their operations need not be delayed. But their instructions were not there and after waiting eleven days in the hope of receiving some word concerning them, two of the commissioners and most of the party returned to Missouri. Sibley, the surveyor, and a few others, however, went on to Santa Fe to be ready to coöperate in the following spring in any measures which the Mexican government might have taken by that time.

Sibley reached the neighborhood of Santa Fe late in October, and immediately wrote to Poinsett at Mexico to inform him of what had been done and to complain that the authorities in New Mexico had no instructions or advice concerning the survey.

manuscript in Mexico: *Relaciones Exteriores*. In the documents Narbona is usually addressed as governor instead of political chief, the term applied to Baca. For a brief account of Escudero's mission see Bancroft, *History of Arizona and New Mexico*, 334. He says: "Not much is definitely stated as to the nature and results of this mission."

<sup>29</sup> A copy of the letter of James Barbour to Benjamin H. Reeves, George C. Sibley, and Pierre Menard, March 16, 1825, is inclosed with letter of Poinsett to Alamán, June 17, 1825. (Manuscript in Mexico: *Relaciones Exteriores*.) Bancroft (*History of Arizona and New Mexico*, 334) and G. C. Broadhead ("The Santa Fe Trail," in *Missouri Historical Review*, 4:314) both give Thomas Mather instead of Menard as the third member of the commission. The treaties made with the Osage and the Kansas Indians in 1825 were signed by Reeves, Sibley, and Mather. (*American State Papers; Indian Affairs*, 2:610.) Doubtless Menard did not accept, or resigned, the commission and Mather was appointed instead. J. C. Brown of St. Louis was employed as surveyor.

<sup>30</sup> Broadhead ("The Santa Fe Trail," in *Missouri Historical Review*, 4:314) says that Fort Osage was on the site of the present town of Sibley, Missouri, near the Missouri River, twenty-five miles east of the western boundary of the state.

He urged Poinsett to tell him as soon as possible what the government at Mexico intended to do about the matter. He explained to Poinsett that the whole length of the proposed road would be about seven hundred and forty miles; "and," he said, "in the whole distance there is not an obstruction that ten men cannot easily remove in a few hours. In fact there cannot be said to be any obstruction. The country is level and the surface is firm; and, with the exception of some twelve or fifteen miles only, the whole distance is through an open prairie. . . . A few hundred dollars will be sufficient to remove all obstructions that lie in the way in the mountains. And if the Mexican government will take measures to secure the good conduct of the Indian tribes within their territory, (who are in the habit of infesting the route and robbing travellers who are engaged in this trade to and from Missouri), there cannot be a doubt but the establishment of this great national highway will prove greatly beneficial to the citizens of both republics, and particularly to those of New Mexico."<sup>31</sup>

After Sibley had been for about two months in New Mexico he submitted to Governor Narbona a report of his work and a map showing the route. Besides the facts contained in the report to Poinsett, this told of the treaties made with the Indian tribes within the United States, and of the intention of the United States government to establish a military post on the Arkansas River for the protection of the route against Indian attacks; and it suggested that the lawless Indians within the Mexican borders could be easily restrained by the establishment of two similar posts between the Arkansas and the mountains for which suitable sites could be found. He added that he could not for a moment doubt but that the government of Mexico would not only sanction the establishment of the contemplated road but would also take effective measures to secure it from the depredations of Indian tribes within its jurisdiction.<sup>32</sup> On the next day after he had received Sibley's report, Governor Narbona forwarded

<sup>31</sup> Sibley to Poinsett, San Fernando, New Mexico, November 12, 1825, inclosed with letter of Poinsett to Camacho, secretary of foreign relations, January 18, 1826. Manuscripts in Mexico: *Relaciones Exteriores*.

<sup>32</sup> Sibley to Narbona, Santa Fe, January 5, 1826. Manuscript in Mexico: *Relaciones Exteriores*.

it to the government at Mexico asking that the proper instructions be sent to him for dealing with the situation.<sup>33</sup>

On January 18, 1826, shortly after receiving Sibley's letter of November 12, Poinsett handed it to the secretary of foreign relations. At the same time he communicated to the government the content of Clay's note of September 24, 1825, expressing the regret of the government of the United States at learning of the reluctance of the Mexican government to coöperate in opening the road, and saying that it was intended for purely commercial purposes and would have no effect whatever on the location of the boundary. To defer marking out the road, Poinsett added, and thereby to deny to the merchants the benefit of it until a future arrangement could be made about a boundary to which it had no necessary relation did not seem politic or advisable. In conclusion Poinsett declared: "As the commissioners on the part of the United States are on the spot, I cannot reject the hope that this government will revise its former decision on this subject and, if it does not aid the efforts of the commissioners of the United States, will at least permit them to accomplish the object of their appointment and complete the demarkation of this road from the frontier of New Mexico to the city of Santa Fe."<sup>34</sup> In writing to Clay on the same day, Poinsett said that the president of Mexico had submitted to Congress the question of the opening of the road and had promised to endeavor to obtain an early decision. But the deliberations of that body, Poinsett added, were interminable. As soon as a decision should be reached, however, he would communicate it to the United States' commissioner then waiting at Santa Fe.<sup>35</sup>

Three months more passed without a decision. Finally on April 17, 1826, Poinsett wrote to the secretary of foreign relations saying that he was compelled again to bring to the latter's notice the matter of the opening of the road, because the commissioner of the United States, after waiting for several months at Santa Fe for an answer from the Mexican government, was

<sup>33</sup> Narbona to secretary of foreign relations, Santa Fe, January 6, 1826. Manuscript in Mexico: Relaciones Exteriores.

<sup>34</sup> Poinsett to Camacho, January 18, 1826. Manuscript in Mexico: Relaciones Exteriores.

<sup>35</sup> Poinsett to Clay, January 18, 1826. Dispatches from Mexico, vol. 1, manuscript in bureau of indexes and archives, department of state.

about to return to the state of Missouri. "It would be a subject of regret," he added, "that the expense of making the journey to Santa Fe with surveyors and the necessary instruments should have been incurred in vain; and I beg Your Excellency to solicit the consent of His Excellency, the president of the United Mexican States, to the survey and marking out of the western section of the proposed road from Santa Fe to Missouri by Mr. Sibley on his return homewards."<sup>36</sup>

A little less than a month later, on May 13, 1826, the Mexican government wrote to Governor Narbona of New Mexico saying that, in view of a note from the plenipotentiary of the United States, the president of Mexico had decided to authorize Narbona to permit Mr. Sibley to survey the western part of the road. The work was to be limited, however, to the survey alone. He was not to cut down trees or erect marks along the route.<sup>37</sup> On the same day, Poinsett was informed of the orders which had been sent to the authorities at Santa Fe. He was told that for the present it was impossible for the Mexican government to send an agent to coöperate with Mr. Sibley in the survey.<sup>38</sup> When these orders reached Santa Fe, Governor Narbona transmitted them on June 14 to Mr. Sibley, who acknowledged them five days later saying that he would determine what he should do, in view of the very restricted permission, as soon as his colleagues, who were expected soon, should arrive.<sup>39</sup>

The writer of this article does not have at hand certain proof of just what was done by the commission on the return. From such sources of information as exist, it seems that the restricted instructions were obeyed to the letter, that the route was surveyed from the neighborhood of Santa Fe to the border on

<sup>36</sup> Poinsett to secretary of foreign relations, April 17, 1826. Manuscript in Mexico: Relaciones Exteriores.

<sup>37</sup> Secretary of foreign relations to governor of New Mexico, May 13, 1826. Manuscript in Mexico: Relaciones Exteriores.

<sup>38</sup> Camacho to Poinsett, May 13, 1826. Manuscript in Mexico: Relaciones Exteriores. An English translation of this note is inclosed in letter of Poinsett to Clay, May 17, 1826. Dispatches from Mexico, vol. 1, manuscript in bureau of indexes and archives, department of state.

<sup>39</sup> Sibley to Narbona, Taos, June 19, 1826. Manuscript in Mexico: Relaciones Exteriores. He acknowledges Narbona's note of June 14, communicating the permission. Narbona to secretary of foreign relations, June 30, 1826, transmitted Sibley's reply to the government at Mexico.

the Arkansas, but that no monuments were erected.<sup>40</sup> When Clay received Poinsett's report concerning the authorization which had been sent to Santa Fe for Sibley's return survey, he said: "The restricted permission given in regard to the proposed road from Missouri into the territories of the United Mexican States does not seem likely to be productive of much good."<sup>41</sup>

From this time, the middle of 1826, until the early part of 1830, with which date this study closes, very little mention is made in diplomatic communications concerning the Santa Fe road or the Santa Fe trade. In April of 1827 Poinsett wrote to Clay concerning a claim against the Mexican government, which he had been asked to present, for losses to merchants of the United States occasioned by an attack of Comanche Indians. He pointed out that those Indians were as likely to attack citizens of Mexico as citizens of the United States, and, if the latter should press claims which the former alike suffered, he feared that Mexico might prevent such trade altogether, either by directly prohibiting it or indirectly hampering it. Furthermore if such claims, even though always bona fide, should be pressed against the government of Mexico, then Mexican citizens might press similar but fictitious claims against the United States for losses within the borders of the latter as was, according to his

<sup>40</sup> Broadhead ("Santa Fe Trail," in *Missouri Historical Review*, 4:315) says: "During 1826 the commissioners obtained authority from the Mexican government to examine routes in their territory; and a survey was begun at Fernando de Taos and ran to connect with the survey of the year before. . . A map of the survey was placed in the office of the War Department at Washington City and was seen there only a few years ago." This article then goes on to describe two maps made by J. C. Brown, the surveyor employed by the commission, showing the route from Fort Osage to Santa Fe, and a third map showing the route from the United States boundary to Santa Fe. One of the first two, Broadhead says, is dated October 27, 1827, and bears an endorsement by Colonel John I. Abert of the corps of engineers in 1844 saying that it is the original plat of the survey. He continues: "A manuscript atlas in the hand writing of Geo. C. Sibley shows route from boundary of Missouri to Fernando de Taos with notes and directions for travelers."

Bancroft (*History of Arizona and New Mexico*, 334) says "the road was never marked by mounds beyond the Arkansas, and only in part to that river," citing Gregg and Prince as authority. He says also: "It does not appear, however, that the traders ever made use of the road as surveyed, preferring to follow the earlier trail."

<sup>41</sup> Clay to Poinsett, June 23, 1826. Instructions, vol. 11, manuscript in bureau of indexes and archives, department of state.

belief, a recently settled claim made by Escudero on the ground that he had been plundered by Osage Indians. Poinsett was led to suspect, from continual complaints against the insolence of the traders from the United States and against their sale of arms to the Indians,<sup>42</sup> that Mexico was suspicious of her northern neighbor and really desired to prohibit the trade by way of the interior.

In spite of insufficient protection, and consequent losses by Indian attacks, the Santa Fe trade continued to grow with a few reverses. In 1829 the long expected military force was furnished by the United States to escort the traders.<sup>43</sup> In April of 1830 Van Buren, then secretary of state, wrote to Butler, the *chargé* at Mexico, telling of the army contingent which the United States was equipping to protect the trade with northern Mexico; and instructed him to endeavor to induce the Mexican government to supply a similar force to meet the caravans on the frontier and escort them to the civilized settlements in Mexico; or, if this was impossible, he was to try to get the consent of that government for the United States troops to guard the caravans to the nearest civilized Mexican settlements. The last, he was told, would be a very delicate matter.<sup>44</sup> This phase of the epi-

<sup>42</sup> Poinsett to Clay, April 13, 1827. Dispatches from Mexico, vol. 2, manuscript in bureau of indexes and archives, department of state. For payment of Escudero's claim see Clay to Poinsett, January 5, 1827. Instructions, 11:227, manuscript in bureau of indexes and archives, department of state.

<sup>43</sup> In response to a resolution of the United States Senate, a report was made by the war department, January 10, 1827, on the "expediency of providing for the establishment of a military post on the trading route between Missouri and Mexico for the protection of that trade." The report advised against the establishment of a permanent post because of the great length of the route to be protected, of the great distance a post on the Arkansas would be from the nearest settlements, and of the consequent difficulty of keeping the post supplied. It suggested instead that an armed force should be provided to travel with the caravans, having a place of rendezvous, only, on the Arkansas. (*American State Papers; Military Affairs*, 3:615.) Major Riley was in command of this first escort. He and his command accompanied the wagon train in 1829 to the Arkansas where he expected to turn back. But the Indians attacked the train a few miles beyond the Arkansas, and the traders appealed to Riley for protection. He crossed into Mexican territory and drove away the Indians and continued with the train as far as the Cimarron (Semirone in the document) where he turned back. After his return to Fort Leavenworth he sent a report to the war department. *Ibid.*, 4:277.

<sup>44</sup> Van Buren to Butler, April 1, 1830. Instructions to American States, 14:176, manuscript in bureau of indexes and archives, department of state.

sode has appealed to writers of popular narratives of events and adventures along the trail; and stories are told of how the United States troops escorted wagon-trains beyond the Arkansas into Mexican territory and were there met by the Mexican soldiers who came to serve as protectors on the rest of the journey.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Cited in n. 1.